

Rabbi's Article II

It's a 'Disgrace' for a Jew Not to Demand of G-d!

Our Torah-portion (-Numbers 9:1-14) tells of the mitzva to bring a *Passover Offering* (-[Link](#)), after which it goes on to tell of the men who were, "*Ritually unclean [because of contact] with a dead person,*" and hence, could not bring a *Passover Offering*, who cried out, "*why should we be diminished?!*" To which G-d responded with giving the mitzva of the *Second Passover* (-[Link](#)). This entire portion begins with (-ibid 9:1), "*G-d spoke to Moses in the Sinai Desert, in the second year of their exodus from the land of Egypt, in the first month.*" On this Rashi comments, "*In the first month': The portion at the beginning of the Book [of Numbers] was not said until Iyar (the second month of the second year). [From this], you learn that there is no order of 'before' and 'after' in the Torah¹. But why did Scripture not begin with this [chapter]? For it is a disgrace to Israel that throughout the forty years the children of Israel were in the desert, they brought only this Passover sacrifice alone.*"

Question: Why does Rashi tell us, "[From this], you learn..." when Rashi himself already taught us this rule as early as in the Book of Genesis (-6:3) and another 5 times thereafter, before our portion?! More so, that the opening of *Numbers* ("G-d spoke to Moses... on the first day of the second month, in the second year") isn't in its chronological place we know from Chapter Z (before our portion), "*And it was that on the day that Moses finished erecting the Tabernacle* (Rashi: "*It was the New Moon of Nissan*" (which is the first month of the Jewish Calendar)...," --And even earlier in *Numbers* (-5:2) "*Command the children of Israel to banish from the camp...* (Rashi: "*This section was said on the day the Tabernacle was erected*"),"-- upon which Rashi comments nothing! Hence, how can Rashi say here (-9:1), "[From this], you learn..."?²

The Explanation: Rashi here uses the word, "*there is no order of 'before' and 'after' in the Torah,*" while in all other places Rashi states, "*there is no 'before' and 'after' in the Torah.*" Meaning, that in all the other places, when the Torah does not state the date of the event, Rashi is not teaching us the format of the Torah, but rather, simply making sure that we do not err in when the events took place. However, here, there is no possibility that we make such an error, because the Torah tells when each event took place. Hence, it is specifically here, when the Torah itself is telling us that the events as they written are not in chronological order, that, "*there is no order of 'before' and 'after' in the Torah.*"

Questions: Rashi then goes on to ask, "*But why did Scripture not begin with this [chapter],*" because, --unlike the *Sifri* which teaches that the only reason why the Torah lists these portions not in chronological order is, "*In order to teach you, 'there is no 'before' and 'after' in the Torah'*"-- Rashi's, "[From this], you learn that..." is not saying that this is so, "*in order to teach you...*" hence, Rashi is asking, what is the reason for the Torah's not using chronological order? Nevertheless, Rashi's wording of, "*But why did Scripture not begin with this,*" is asking that there is a specific reason why the *Book of Numbers* should have started purposely with this portion (of the *Passover Sacrifice* and *Second Passover*), for which Rashi then gives the reason why the Torah nevertheless, does not start with this portion: "*For it is a disgrace to Israel that throughout the forty years the children of Israel were in the desert, they brought only this Passover sacrifice alone.*" Why does Rashi feel that (void his answer) the *Book of Numbers* should have specifically started with this portion?

In order to understand this, let us ask *Another Question*: How can Rashi state here that which, "*throughout the forty years the children of Israel were in the desert, they brought only this Passover sacrifice alone,*" was, "*a disgrace to Israel,*" when Rashi himself, upon G-d's original commanding us concerning the *Passover Sacrifice* in Egypt states (-Exodus 12:25), "*And it shall come to pass when you enter the land... you shall observe this service - Rashi: '*Scripture makes this commandment contingent upon their entry into the land*³, but in the desert, they were obligated only to bring one Passover sacrifice, the one they performed in the second year, [which they did] by divine mandate'"?! --Tosfos (-[Link](#)) and other commentaries on Rashi explain that this in itself is the *disgrace*, that Israel sinned with the spies and were punished to not enter into Israel for 40 years. However, (i) In this portion there is, not only no mention of the sin of the spies, but Rashi himself in continuation to this portion states (-10:29), "*We are traveling to the place': Immediately, within three days, we will enter the Land*"! (ii) According to *Tosfos*, the *disgrace* is: (a) Their not entering the Land of Israel, and not about the *Passover Sacrifice*, and (b) is concerning every mitzva (which unlike *Passover Sacrifice*, they didn't perform even once) that is contingent on being in the Land of Israel?!*

The Explanation: Rashi's issue with a portion speaking of, "*a disgrace to Israel,*" is only, "*But why did Scripture not begin with this [chapter]?" We find Rashi's commentary concerning the beginning of: (i) *Genesis*, "*Now for what reason did He commence with 'In the beginning'?*" (and not with the first mitzva) *Because of [the verse] 'The strength of His works He related to His people, to give them the inheritance of the nations.'*" (ii) *Exodus*, "*And these are the names of the sons of Israel': ...He counted them... to let us know how precious they are [to Him].*" (iii) *Leviticus*, "*And He called to Moses': Every [time G-d communicated with Moses of a commandment to Israel]... it was always preceded by [G-d] calling [to Moses]. קריאה - Kriah (calling) is an expression of affection.*" (iv) *Numbers*, "*G-d spoke... in the Sinai Desert... on the first of the month': Because they were dear to Him, He counted them**

1. This is discussed in the Talmud in connection to whether the Torah was originally *many scrolls*, each being written as they were happening (hence, they were originally written in chronological order), or as a *complete book* (hence, they were never written in chronological order), written only at the end of the 40 years in the desert, right before Moses passes away (and according to one opinion, the last seven verses of Moses' death was written by Joshua), while throughout the 40 years, the Torah portions they had were only oral.
2. Simply, we can say that specifically here, where in both portions the *Torah* clearly states the date when they took place, clearly showing us that the event of the later date is written before the event of the earlier date, is where, "*we learn,*" that, "*there is no chronological order in the Torah.*"
3. The Rebbe goes into many footnotes exploring the different opinions on this, whether Israel's not bringing a *Passover Sacrifice* for the next 38 years was because they did not circumcise their children --Here too, there is exploration of one who's son is not circumcised, whether this blocks the *father* from bringing a *Passover Sacrifice* or not, whether it was only those who were born in the desert who did not circumcise their sons--, and if so, did the few who did circumcise their sons do a *Passover Sacrifice*? After a slew of questions on this reasoning of not being circumcised, the Rebbe ultimately focus on Rashi's clear statement in Exodus, that from the very onset, G-d gave the mitzva of the *Passover Sacrifice* to be contingent on, "*when you enter the land.*"

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often." (v) Deuteronomy, "These are the words: Since these are words of rebuke... therefore it makes no explicit mention of the incidents [in which they transgressed], but rather merely alludes to them... out of respect for Israel." Thus, knowing that each of the Five Books of Moses begins with "preciousness of Israel," we must therefore say that Rashi's question of, "But why did Scripture not begin with this [chapter]?" is because Rashi sees this portion as a far greater, "preciousness of Israel," than the actual opening portion of Numbers! What, "preciousness of Israel," does Rashi see in our portion?!

Our portion of the *Passover Sacrifice*, which is contingent on our being in the *Land of Israel*, and hence, not an obligation in the desert, and nevertheless G-d gifted Israel with, "They performed in the second year, [which they did] by divine mandate," and of which, "So they made the Passover sacrifice in the first month... according to all that G-d had commanded Moses, so did the children of Israel do," is a most culminative⁴ "preciousness of Israel" to those of the previous Books of Moses! Even more so, our portion then goes on to tell us: (i) The men who were, "Ritually unclean [because of contact] with a dead person," out of a great yearning to do G-d's commandment cried out, "why should we be diminished?!" (ii) To which G-d responded to their outcry, with the *mitzva* of the *Second Passover*. Here is (i) a deeper, (ii) and then even deeper, "preciousness of Israel"!! This is what Rashi is asking with, "But why did Scripture not begin with this [chapter]?" To which he answers, "For it is a disgrace to Israel."

Let us understand Rashi's answer: The, "preciousness of Israel," is specifically because, (a) G-d gave them a *mitzva*, which was contingent upon being in Israel⁵, even though they were in the desert, and (b) more so, even those who were not allowed to observe it, upon their outcry and demand of, "Why should we be diminished" brought to G-d even giving them this *mitzva*! Hence, we now have a question: How could Israel not have demanded of G-d year after year that they be given this mitzva of the Passover Sacrifice, knowing that G-d has already, and would definitely continue to give it to them if they just demanded it?!! This is what Rashi is answering with his, "For it is a disgrace to Israel that throughout the forty years the children of Israel were in the desert, they brought only this Passover sacrifice alone," rather than demanding, and thus achieving, to bring it every year of the 40 years!!!!

However, why didn't Moses, Aharon, and the likes, at least cry out to G-d for them to be able to do this *mitzva* for the 39 years?! The answer is, that as long as Moses and Aharon were not doing the *Passover Sacrifice*, the, "disgrace to Israel" was not blatantly apparent in their not demanding, and hence, not having this *mitzva*. However, once there are those who did demand, and do have the *mitzva*, the "disgrace to Israel" then becomes glaringly apparent! This is the greatness of our true *Princes of Israel*, in which they forgo, not only their physical, but even their spiritual --(Exodus 32:32), "And if not (G-d will not forgive Israel for the sin of the golden calf), then erase me from Your book (Torah)!!"-- wellbeing for Israel, that there not be a glaring disgrace upon them!

Rashi's Wine (esoteric teaching) of the *Torah*: Rashi states that it is specifically here, in the *Book of Numbers*, which in its true Hebrew name is, *BaMidbar* - In the *Desert*, that we are taught, "there is no order of 'before' and 'after' in the Torah." The main novelty in our portion, of which we were not already taught of in the *Book of Exodus* is the *Second Passover*. In the "order" system, the *Second Passover* should have been taught together with the *Passover Sacrifice*, in the *Book of Exodus*. Deeper yet, this is the only *mitzva* that defied the order of how a *mitzva* were given by G-d, "From Above to Below," and instead came about through a "there is no order" fashion of men crying out to G-d, and demanding, "Why are we to be diminished?!" In the categories of *Service to G-d*, this "there is no order" is the service of *Teshuvah* (Return; Repentance). Which is the service of someone who did not behave in "order," by sinning and crossing over from the right path. this is also the mystical meaning of the men's crying out to G-d, "We are ritually unclean [because of contact] with a dead person." This then is the deeper mystical teaching of Rashi, in which the, "Disgrace to Israel," is that the 40 years in the desert, Israel was in a state of *post-sin*, and hence should have been serving G-d, beyond the limitations of just "order," --in which the *Passover Sacrifice* is not an obligation until they enter in the Land of Israel-- but rather, Israel should have been within the *Service of Teshuvah*, the "no order" of the *Second Passover*, crying out to G-d and demanding, "Why should we be diminished," through which they would have in return received from G-d in the fashion of "no order," to do the *Passover Sacrifice*, even in the desert, where there is no, "order" obligation for it.

The Lesson: In accordance to all of the above, what our portion teaches us is how to G-d there is the importance of our, "crying out, asking, demanding from our deepest sense of yearning!" Being that (-Tanya, Chapter 17), "The Torah is eternal," with its guidance being eternal --for all places and all times, and especially so in our era-- that all our prayers be in this fashion, and especially the all-encompassing soul and heart prayer of each and every Jew --prayed three times a weekday: "Speedily cause the scion of David Your servant to flourish," and on, weekdays Shabbat, and holidays: "May it be Your will... that the Temple be build speedily in our days"--, that the true and complete redemption come, in the fashion of (-Sanhedrin 97b), "immediately they are redeemed"!

4. Exodus speaks of the, "preciousness of Israel," (only as) in themselves, hence G-d counts them. Leviticus speaks of the, "preciousness of Israel" as G-d gives us His commandments, "Every [time G-d communicated with Moses of a commandment to Israel]... it was always preceded by... an expression of affection." Then comes Numbers and speaks of the, "preciousness of Israel," in G-d's giving them a *mitzva*, which in essence isn't even applicable yet, Israel fulfills it entirely, those who can't cry out to G-d with intense yearning, and G-d grants them their request!

5. Different than the other *mitzvot* of such a contingency, in which, as agricultural *mitzvot*, their contingency is as such that it is impossible to observe them in the desert (even the *mitzva* of the firstborn animal, only began upon entering into Israel; See Kedushin (-37a and onward) the different legalities of all this, whether it is a *mitzva* of the land or not, whether it is an obligation of the body of the person, wherever he may be or not, etc.), the *Passover Sacrifice* (i) can happen in the desert, and (b) did happen once in the desert.